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Queer Animality

What happens when animals appear on human landscapes? In spite of their regular co-occurrence with humans, nonhuman animals are typologically situated elsewhere from humans, as in the linguistic concept of an animacy hierarchy, a scale of relative sentience that places humans at the very top. This presumed superiority of humans is itself duratively supported and legitimated by “modern” states in a transnational system of (agricultural) capital. Yet to consider the biopolitical ramifications wrought by these separated categories is extremely complex, since “humans” are not all treated one way and “animals” are not uniformly treated another way. This is why the statement that someone “treated me like a dog” is one of liberal humanism’s fictions: some dogs are treated quite well, and many humans suffer in conditions of profound indignity.¹

Considering animacy hierarchies as ecologies (with interrelations between types), and also as ontological propositions (with divisions between types), this chapter asks in what ways they are regularly, sometimes unwittingly, forsworn, disregarded, or overstepped by their very users. I choose “ecology” here to suggest an *imagined* system, not an actual, self-regulating one. What ecologies do such separations between human and animal rely upon and potentially transform? This chapter considers in particular how animality, the “stuff” of animal nature that sometimes sticks to animals, sometimes bleeds back onto textures of humanness. This fibrillation and indeterminacy

is perhaps not surprising, given the radicality of the founding segregation. I suggest that thinking critically about animality has important consequences for queered and racialized notions of animacy; for it is animality that has been treated as a primary mediator, or crux (though not the only one), for the definition of “human,” and, at the same moment, of “animal.”

This chapter takes a specific tack: first, attending to questions of language, I ask after the politics of the exclusion of animals from language and assess the legitimacy, scientific and otherwise, of the stacked deck that it represents. Then I move to examine a signal moment within the work of language philosopher J. L. Austin from the viewpoint of racialized animality. While the passage by Austin is frequently glossed in queer scholarship, Austin’s peculiar constellation of race, animality, and sexuality is here explored in depth. Following this, I look at historical visual culture that triangulates these terms, including a foundational text of Asian American studies, the fictional character of Fu Manchu, to rediscover and stage Fu’s animality. In a coda, I look at a recent, somewhat spectacularized example, the story of a chimp named Travis, in order to pose questions about current, possibly queer, kinship formations between animals and humans and what they reveal of the unsteadiness of categorical hierarchies and the legitimacy afforded to some of their leakages. Throughout, I reconsider the persistent ways in which animals are overdetermined within human imaginaries.

Animal Language

Given the segregating terms of linguistic animacy, it is important to understand *how* the sentience of animals is assessed, especially with regard to its primary criteria: language and methods of communication. For instance, Derrida’s famous essay “And Say the Animal Responded?” explores the possibility of nonhuman-animal “response” as distinguished from “reaction” by hermeneutically approaching the gap between the two; he levels a critique at the very use of language as a loaded criterion of division between humans and animals, offering the nonsingular, and animating, *animot* in *animal*’s stead. If he notes animals’ exclusion from language within humanist traditions, he nevertheless does not explore the possibility of animals’ own languages.² Akira Mizuta Lippit’s work on animal figurations, too, expressly ex-

cludes animals from language, without attempting to think what language is or could be: “Animals are linked to humanity through mythic, fabulous, allegorical, and symbolic associations, but not through the shared possession of language as such. Without language one cannot participate in the world of human beings.”³ Neither of these writers is concerned, however, with the findings of linguistic research about animal communication, which finds ample intelligent language use in many species, not all of which are understood as taxonomically or intellectually proximate to humans.

Language’s status among creatures, human and not human, continues to be hotly debated among humans, for as a register of intelligence, judgment, and subjectivity it is a key criterion by which lay, religious, and expertly scientific humans afford subjectivity—and sentience—to animate beings both within and beyond the human border. Who and what are considered to possess “language,” and the qualities afforded to it within that location, are factors that influence how identification, kinship, codes of morality, and rights are articulated, and how affection and rights themselves are distributed; and hence how ranges of human-nonhuman discourses such as disability, racialized kinship, industrial agriculture, pet ownership, and “nature” itself are arbitrated.

Language is arguably a major criterion (or even the defining attribute) that separates humans from animals, even among theorists who decry the fact of the segregation. Aristotle’s notion that language critically separated humans from animals becomes an evident legacy in Martin Heidegger’s postulation: “Where there is no language, as in the being of stone, plant, and animal, there is also no openness either of that which is not and of the empty.”⁴ While all kinds of “behavior” (the primordial stuff of psychology, a particularly powerful humanist-scientific discourse in Western history) are richly elaborated (for instance, the marvelous capacities of various animate beings, including mammals and invertebrates, many of which seem to far outshine human capacity), it is *language’s* degree of elaboration that seems to spike prominently and uniquely for humans. Of course, this is to the advantage of humans: the linguistic criteria are established prominently and immutably in humans’ terms, establishing human preeminence before the debates about the linguistic placement of humans’ animal subordinates even begin. Yet the exclusion of animals from the realm of language is, historically, a relatively recent and uneven

phenomenon; as Giorgio Agamben comments, “Up until the eighteenth century, language—which would become man’s identifying characteristic *par excellence*—jumps across orders and classes, for it is suspected that even birds can talk.”⁵ Agamben considers how the consolidation of the category *Homo sapiens*, as created through Linnaeus and his taxonomies, “is neither a clearly defined species nor a substance; it is, rather, a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human.”⁶

Cary Wolfe describes the consequences of the liberal philosophical tradition’s “self-serving abstraction of the subject of freedom” for animal-human ontologies, writing, “while the category of the subject was formally empty in the liberal tradition, it remained materially full of asymmetries and inequalities in the social sphere, so that theorizing the subject as ‘nothing in particular’ could easily look like just another sign of the very privilege and mobility enjoyed by those who were quite locatable indeed on the social ladder—namely, at the top.”⁷ This move follows earlier critiques of the ways that the abstracted subjects of liberalism simply installed, rather than removed, unmarked privileges among white, male humans in terms of gender and race.

One central task, I believe, is to be careful about conflating human ideas about an animal with the actual animal itself, a caution somewhat distinct from Derrida’s concern that we are crafting a universal category of “the animal” by our use of the very word. This is a hard habit to break, given the species burden that an individual animal bears in the view of humans and the conflation of referent, even for us theorists, with actuality (which of course often leads to actual changes to that effect or in that direction). Simultaneously, we should not use the “actual” animal reflexively as a necessary ontological or epistemological pressure back onto human understanding, but should hold the two (or three or four) in a productive, self-aware epistemological tension.

As my investment in language within this book is primarily concerned with its material economies, I am less interested in tangling too extensively here with the precise question of “animal language” in terms of either the possibility of an epistemological meeting-ground or a philosophical disarticulation of the upper end of the animacy hierarchy; others have admirably waded through the complexities of this domain. Yet I am also reluctant to abandon the possibility of alternative foci of investigation (aside from language) into questions of

what nonhuman and human animals are and what they share, since, as we know, difference does not collapse even when we wish it away.

To the extent that resolving the question of an epistemological meeting-ground could relieve some of the condescension that the profusion of human domains of research on and writing about animals (in terms that are clearly not theirs) would seem to enact, I suggest that, separately from questions of language, we be prepared to ask not only whether nonhuman animals might also possess something like a “hierarchy of animacy,” but even more deeply, to ask after a register of sentience, broadly construed. The scientific study of perception certainly suggests the beginnings of some intimation of this “registry of sentience,” whereby, on the one hand, the distinction between perception and cognition is being methodically worn down (see, for instance, the work of Louise Barrett)⁸ and, on the other hand, there is the awareness that motion perception is very similar among nonhuman animals and human animals, including the presence of mirror neurons in great apes. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone’s *The Primacy of Movement* extends animacy perception to all animate beings, arguing that movement is central to this understanding of animacy; she further makes the case that mind-body segregations continue to distortionary levels among cognitive scientists and neuroscientists.⁹

Thinking—and feeling—through sentience promises a revising of dominant animacy hierarchies, through its allowance of a broad range of interanimation and uncognized recognition. But sentience is also not without its problems, particularly if it is either restricted to what could be discoverable (and falsifiable) through experimental research or conceived in terms of the presence of pain and pleasure (the foundation for claims within animal rights). I return to these questions of sentience, subjectivity and objectivity, and transcorporeality at the end of the book.

Austin’s Marriage, Revisited

Let us consider the animality of one originary moment in what is called “theory.” Recently, a number of works have studied and critiqued the deployment of animal figures in theoretical argumentation. Indeed, theory itself has deployed the raced animal figure perhaps more than has been noticed, in this case precisely in a domain that attempts to struggle with questions of language as it “materializes”: that

is, within and through notions of the performative. In 1955, the British language philosopher J. L. Austin put forward a theory of language and action in a book called *How to Do Things with Words*, consisting of a series of transcribed and edited lectures.¹⁰ As the lectures progressed, Austin developed the concept of the performative, from a simple class of utterances characterized by special main verbs in finite form, to a more complex tripartite typology of *acts* that involve not merely the special verbs but all utterances: locutionary (speech) content, illocutionary (conventional) content, and perlocutionary (effective) content. In an early lecture, Austin was working off the simple definition of the performative, one he would later break down, such as in the example “I thee wed” in a marriage ceremony.

Stating that a performative could not succeed without supporting conditions, Austin wrote, “Suppose we try first to state schematically . . . some at least of the things which are necessary for the smooth or ‘happy’ functioning of a performative (or at least of a highly developed explicit performative).”¹¹ He went on to list a number of ordered features, among them “a1. There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further, a2. the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.”¹²

Austin’s model was also premised on the assumption that communication is “normally” goodwilled and relies on the proper positioning of that person delivering the performative. He wrote, “One might . . . say that, where there is not even a pretence of *capacity* or a *colourable* claim to it, then there is no accepted conventional procedure; it is a *mockery*, like a marriage with a monkey”¹³ (my emphasis). Proper capacity and goodwill were critical to the success of Austin’s performative, and these conditions remained, if somewhat sublimated, through developments of the language scheme. In the moment of defining a critical aspect of the successful performative, Austin turned to marriage; at other key moments in the text, marriage again emerged as a central exemplar. Eve Sedgwick has discussed this pattern’s appearance in a flood of examples that curiously themselves tend to fail as performatives, either as counterexamples (how not to do) or simply as *examples*, which cannot therefore function as executing marriage.¹⁴ Sedgwick does not, however, note that one of the dramatic flourishes

Austin recruits to seal the illegitimacy of an unauthorized marriage is the figure of a monkey. In addition, it is interesting that if a claim to capacity must exist, then it must have a kind of substance: it must be, in Austin's words, *colourable*. I read this as a suggestive provocation regarding "color" as an intensifier, one that is imbricated with questions of legitimacy and the force of the law under which utterances are enacted.

What does Austin's marriage with a monkey suggest, and on what does it rely to make any kind of sense? While Austin's articulation of "mockery, like a marriage with a monkey," seems mundane in the sense that monkey invocations often function as normative dismissals, we can look more closely at the significance of its collocations. More specifically, we can consider what a queer reading might offer: "A mockery, like a marriage with a monkey" equates a particular kind of animal with the performative's excess (and, perhaps, an affective excess inappropriate to the encounter), that which must be sloughed off for the performative to work efficiently and effectively.

But what of the monkey? Here the "monkey" stands in for something: a creature with limited, superficial identifiability, grammatically determined only by the indefinite article *a*; simile's backgrounded comparator (showing it to be even further expelled); a presumably language-less, cognitively reduced beast; and finally, the example which serves as an example precisely because it is self-evidently extreme. As existing scholarship tells us from many different disciplinary sites and, indeed, as everyday language practices also confirm, vivid links, whether live or long-standing, continue to be drawn between immigrants, people of color, laborers and working-class subjects, colonial subjects, women, queer subjects, disabled people, and *animals*, meaning, not the class of creatures that includes humans but quite the converse, the class against which the (often rational) human with inviolate and full subjectivity is defined.¹⁵ This latter characterization exposes why animals have been so useful as figures, since they stand in for the intermediary zone between human and nonhuman status, and for the field of debate about the appropriateness of humane and inhumane treatment.

Shoshana Felman marks the monkey example as a "monstrous marriage" (the other, also in the text, being "bigamy") and evidence of the "black humor" of Austin's text, remarking on the function of the "triviality of the witty example."¹⁶ While the example is surely witty,

and while it might be said to evoke parallel planes of serious theory on the one hand and humor on the other, I wonder *what kind* of humor this provokes for its readers: is it really, or always, pleasurable, particularly if we critically examine the value of that monkey?

Marking this phrase as trivial humor is certain to foreclose an examination of its precise bite and of the quirky ontological logic of *negative* mattering, a mattering that, ultimately, matters. Felman considers the “witty example,” which is in her view common for Austin, as distinct from the business of substantiation or of theory, claiming that it belongs to another stage entirely, one that is constructed as humorous and hence rubs up against the straight-faced realm of theory. But Austin’s text should also be assessed against its own genre: that of ordinary language philosophy, which structured itself broadly around pointedly simple (silly?) examples. For instance, John Weightman’s book on “language and the absurd” considers as its signature, titular case the ever-unraveling phrase “the cat sat on the mat.”¹⁷ As Derrida pointed out in his essay “Signature Event Context,” “one will no longer be able to exclude, as Austin wishes, the ‘non-serious’ . . . from ‘ordinary’ language.”¹⁸ It becomes more difficult to determine what is trivial and what is not.

Read “seriously” enough to assess its textual value as simultaneously nontrivial, Austin’s structural dismissal of the animal monkey and his matter-of-fact exclusion of the monkey from the institution of marriage together consign the marrying monkey to queer life.¹⁹ I would assert that, in citing a particular kind of marriage just as he asserts its invalidity, however humorously, Austin is responding to a sensed threat. Someone’s heteronormative and righteous marriage must be protected against the mockeries of marriage; and we might imagine that someone’s righteous and heteronormative speech must be protected against the mockery of performative improprieties, which for all practical purposes are open to convenient definition. Arguably, then, it is not just marrying monkeys, but those who occupy proximal category membership, that is, those who *approximate* marrying monkeys, who are consigned to queer life.

What might have most registered as a threat or worthy of exclusion? Austin wrote these lectures in Britain in the mid-1950s, a period of intensive societal and legal flux in which both heterosexuality and racial purity were being actively shored up. In the 1950s, British police commenced a widely publicized purge of homosexuals, leading to the ar-

rests of many high-profile men who were convicted of “deviant” behavior. Parallel to the Cold War “lavender scare” in the United States, the British Home Secretary Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe promised to rid England of the “plague” of homosexuality, a promise he made good on by prosecuting hundreds of men.²⁰

Austin was also writing at a time in which immigrants from formally decolonized sites were arriving in greater numbers, as Britain went through the intensified strains of postcolonial revision.²¹ The year 1948 saw the first group of West Indian immigrants enter Britain from sites in the Commonwealth, having been granted citizenship through the British Nationality Act. Violence and discrimination against the immigrants grew in the 1950s, resulting in restrictive Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 (the year of publication of *How to Do Things with Words*).

Austin’s monkey need not be innocent of this more generalized context. Already circulating was a long history of British and European associations of apes and monkeys with African subjects, fed and conditioned by the imperialist culture of colonial relations. These were underlain by an abiding evolutionary mapping which temporally projected non-European peoples and nonwhite racialized groups onto earlier stages of human evolution; this is part and parcel of what Nicole Shukin has called “the productive ambivalence of the colonial stereotype and the animal sign.”²²

The powerfully racialized undertones of “mockery” have been theorized by thinkers such as Homi Bhabha, who opens his essay “Of Mimicry and Man: On the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse” with a citation from Sir Edward Cust’s “Reflections on West African Affairs . . . Addressed to the Colonial Office” (Hatchard, London, 1839): “To give the colony the forms of independence is a mockery.”²³ Thus, we might say that a racial—as well as freakishly gendered—body haunts Austin’s monkey, just as British whiteness may haunt Austin’s authorized speaker. Once again, a colonial past might lurk inside a presumably “innocent” cultural form that seems to deploy a presentist—or timeless—animal figure. Austin was working in a specific social and political context, and to tease out the undertones of his language is also to explore the contemporary hauntings or habits of epistemological projection with regard to animality, sex, and race. We might also use this example to understand some linguistic animal figures as racialized and sexualized before the fact, especially if used in contexts

where race has a history of social or cultural presence. The “monkey” is a powerfully loaded trope, but not always (or necessarily) negative; in his study of black vernacular language in African American literary works, Henry Louis Gates Jr. discusses how the “Signifying Monkey” is also, within African American culture, a critical trickster figure that self-reflexively speaks back to language.²⁴ Other monkey figures, such as the Hindu Hanuman and the Chinese mythical Monkey King, have culturally valued trickster ways.

Still, so many apparently innocuous conjurings of animal-human relating—as in the absurd mockery of marriage to a monkey—are underlain or counterpointed by far-from-innocent global histories whose legacies continue through animal-human mappings. For this, we can credit not only early classificatory divisions of Greek philosophers that included congruences between animals and slaves and between animals (nature) and women, but more-recent centuries of shifting borders to facilitate colonial animalization.

But how are each of these categories—animality, sexuality, race, ability—stationed in regard to one another? Again, animality cannot but mediate and interrupt simplistic analogies, even those in which it is involved. This present alteration in itself might properly be dubbed *queer*, in light of queer’s own mutative animacy. In other words, within terms of animacy hierarchies, might we have a way to think about queer animality as a genre of queer animacy, as a modulation of life force? It is my contention that animacy can *itself* be queer, for animacy can work to blur the tenuous hierarchy of human-animal-vegetable-mineral with which it is associated. Recentering on animality (or the animals who face humans) tugs at the ontological cohesion of “the human,” stretching it out and revealing the contingent striations in its springy taffy: it is then that entities as variant as disability, womanhood, sexuality, emotion, the vegetal, and the inanimate become more salient, more palpable as having been rendered proximate to the human, though they have always subtended the human by propping it up.

Animal Theories

Austin was not alone in his recourse to the animal as a metaphoric crux within theories of language and the law. Animals bear the burden of symbolic weight, not least within contemporary cultural criticism. At levels linguistic and gestural, political and theatrical, ritual

and scientific, representations abound that implicitly or explicitly invoke animals and humans in complex relations. Animal studies is a multidisciplinary field, reaching across environmental studies, science and technology studies, psychoanalysis, ecocriticism, and literary and cultural studies. This growing field makes clear the profound interconstitution of animal and human identities. At the same time, “the animal” stands in to melancholically symbolize what is being lost as a consequence (“natural” or not) of human dominance over the earth it occupies. Certainly, animal representations can remain symbolically tied to human anxieties about the extinct status of their real-life counterparts, as Ursula Heise found true of the fictional animals (re-generated dinosaurs, virtual animals, and electronic animals) in several works from the late twentieth century.²⁵ Made “freakish” by the technological innovations required to make them, they are often spectacularized as modern-day *lusus naturae*,²⁶ or, in the case of Heise’s analysis of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, fetishized and commodified as pets.

Perhaps because it has served for the human as such a rich comparative repository—because it is kept significatorily empty—there is play in the animal: what the animal means, what it does, what kind of sex it has, what it wants. Such play yields a vast range of imagistic, affective, and economic projections, from images of bourgeois leisure in the park, to formal calculations of agricultural labor on the farm, to military might in the form of cultivated horses. At the same time, symbologies of freely romping or well-trained and valued animals are shadowed by the converse. They are also sources of reference for frighteningly indefinable or disallowable sexual practices (such as “beastly” rape or unctuous, multilimbed octopus sex), and they are the registers of the very disposability of life, where animal status yields death, such as when war legitimates dehumanizations or animalizations of state enemies. In Christian traditions, animals are further vested (or weighted) with a frolicking, prelapsarian innocence of Creation. What would it mean to take this variance of animal play seriously by exploring the ways in which racialities, animalities, and sexualities *interplay*, and are affectively rich, delightful, illusory, toxic, abject, innocent, dark, light, natural, and artificial?

This attraction-repulsion is not unprecedented. The human engagement with both nonanimals and with “technologies” predates by millennia such interabsorption of categories; consider Aristotle’s

discussion of slavery, which states that “there is little or no difference between the uses of domestic animals and slaves.”²⁷ Indeed, it is not actually clear how we might diagnose this collapsing of animal, human, and machine as unique in terms of some greater speed or intensity of conceptual conflation. Rather, stubborn axes of human difference are imposed on the bodies of animals, and those of animal difference are thrust onto the bodies of humans, differences which repeat and repeat, calling on any narrative of utopian merging to account for itself.

When many axes of human difference collide, the stakes heighten; if the animal figure mediates many of these axes, then it becomes a condensed and explosive discursive site. These crises of humanity-with-animality are concerned with borders and attractions. And it is in fact not surprising that “even” in an era of biotechnology, racisms attain, for this would be to suggest that “innovation,” at the leading edge of futurity, is also at the height of sociopolitical advancement. As Sarah Franklin has suggested in her book *Dolly Mixtures*, such charged drives toward unindictable advancement do not go unaccompanied by their affective underside: there are simultaneous concerns about biotechnology conditioned and fed precisely by the fear of what is yet to be known.²⁸

Over and again, the animal, cited specifically as “animal” (in categorical contrast to “human”), thus survives in representation. Animals rematerialize here and there as multilingual, interdisciplinary beings, sometimes just themselves, sometimes vitalizing fictive monsters, facing humans. Other zones of encounter include zoos and exotic or domesticated pet ownership, each site with its own discursive terms; pets, for instance, bear the dizzying simultaneity of being named, individualized, and “kinned” while remaining special and distinct precisely for being nonhuman.²⁹ In a way, animals serve as objects of almost fetishistic recuperation, recruited as signifiers of “nature,” or “the real,” and used to stand in for a sometimes conflicting array of other cultural meanings (including fear, discipline, sexuality, purity, wisdom, and so on).

This special status applied to the animal is part of the “new economy of being” of modernity; as Lippit notes, “It is a cliché of modernity: human advancement always coincides with a recession of nature and its figures—wildlife, wilderness, human nature.”³⁰ Lippit claims that animals constitute a third term, an “essential epistemological

category” (mediating between scientific thought on the one hand and artistic representation on the other). However, in an interview, Donna Haraway voices frustration with the humanism subtending the singular conception of “the animal”: “[T]he animal is every bit as much a humanist abstraction, a universal, an empty, a misplaced concreteness issue, but it’s worse than that. It’s stripped of all particularity and reality and most of all, from my view, stripped of relationality.”³¹ Haraway here refers to the regular forfeiture of particular knowledge about nonhuman animals, one that turns them into a “universal” abstraction and ignores the fact that the very category of “animal” might be so overly generalized that it threatens to collapse. Knowing what this category consists of with any particularity is made impossible not only by recourse to a pancategory like *animal*, but also by humans’ ignorance, which scoops all that is nonhuman and animate into one fold (unless one is in a position to cultivate more specialized understanding, such as veterinary or breed-specific knowledge).

Haraway reminds us, too, that actual animals often bear little if any resemblance to the signifiers and discourses used to reference them. Though the difference between symbolic and actual is easily observed, the *quality* of this difference between a symbolic and actual animal is important. Critics of animal studies might interject that one fault of animal representation is that it appears to ignore the “real” lives of animals. Such a conflation takes too easily as given the indelible link between an animal signifier and its referents, as well as the purity of the natural “real.” Because animal signifiers are so deeply bound up with human cultural, political, and social meaning, one can never assume these are one and the same. Rather, the connection they share is that of *reference*, a relation that is sometimes invoked, but all too often not. Haraway diagnoses the extraordinary signifiatory powers given to an entity called “the animal” as characterized by “misplaced concreteness.”

Amid the fluctuations of animals’ lives, “the animal” as animal sustains, while humans project the vexed peculiarities that are the consequences of interested humans’ psychic fibrillations onto the specters and accomplices of animal representations. Certain kinds of animality are racialized not through nature’s or modernity’s melancholy but through another temporalized map: that of pseudo-Darwinian evolutionary discourses tied to colonialist strategy and pedagogy that superimposed phylogenetic maps onto synchronic human racial ty-

pologies, yielding simplistic promulgating equations of “primitive” peoples with prehuman stages of evolution. It is this discursive template that informs the contemporary discourse “on Africa,” which, as Achille Mbembe writes in *On the Postcolony*,

is almost always deployed in the framework (or in the fringes) of a meta-text about the *animal*—to be exact, about the *beast*: its experience, its world, and its spectacle. In this meta-text, the life of Africans unfolds under two signs. First is the sign of the strange and the monstrous. . . . [T]he other sign, in the discourse of our times, under which African life is interpreted is that of intimacy. It is assumed that, although the African has a self-referring structure that makes him or her close to being “human,” he or she belongs, up to a point, to a world we cannot penetrate. At bottom, he/she is familiar to us. We can give an account of him/her in the same way we can understand the psychic life of the *beast*. We can even, through a process of domestication and training, bring the African to where she or he can enjoy a fully human life.³²

Such a discursive mapping has had the effect of both temporalizing race and relegating the fields of barbarism, animality, and primitivism to yet another past, quite beyond the recession of animals under the sign of modernity. I am interested in exploring the means by which animal figures, in their epistemological duties as “third terms,” frequently also serve as zones of attraction for racial, sexual, or abled otherness, often simultaneously. Mining sometimes disparate cultural works for these collocations reveals the more complex psychic investments of a whiteness triple-dipped in heteronormativity, ableism, and speciesism and tells of the precise quality of the animacies in which it is invested.

Animacy Theory

While it would be false to equate the two, relations between the two epistemological regions of *queer* and *animal* abound. The animal has long been an analogical source of understanding for human sexuality: since the beginning of European and American sexology in the nineteenth century, during which scientific forays into sexuality were made, homosexuality has served both as a limit case for establishing the scientific zone of the sexual “normal”³³ and, more recently, as a

positive validation for “naturalness” (in which what nature maps is fail-safe to the nonhuman animal, as opposed to the messy interventions of culture in the human animal).³⁴ Such coincidences are by no means a tale of the past. A durable Enlightenment calculus, uplifting rationality and retaining its gendering as masculine, solidified the believed proximity or belonging of women to nature, and in some cases additionally imputed women’s categorial attraction to animality. Such partnerings are intensified or provoked by marks of race and class, albeit unpredictably.

One key early scholar of queer animal studies, Jennifer Terry, has examined ways in which “animals provide models for scientists seeking a biological substrate of sexual orientation”;³⁵ in addition, the popular equation of sexuality as evidence of one’s animality or “animal nature” is oddly inverted. Under certain circumstances, the animal itself *becomes* sexuality, to the extent that the biological material of nonhuman animals (including but not limited to DNA) is used in human-directed reproductive research such as stem cell technology and that animal by-products and hormones are used to increase human sex drives.³⁶ Likewise, consumer-driven campaigns link young children’s premature puberty with hormones in the cow’s milk and chicken that they consume (concerns that are often racialized, as in the widely publicized case of the “epidemic” of accelerated sexual development in Puerto Rico).³⁷ In such “new natures,” animals are not a third term; instead, humans and nonhuman animals recombine sexually within the same ontological fold in which they are sometimes admitted to belong.

While earlier works have understood scientific investments in terms of “homosexuality,” more recent threads of scholarship have mapped the lessons of a more wide-ranging queer theory to the region of mediation between human and nonhuman animal. Thus, the sometimes resolutely materialized “animal” and the sometimes resolutely immaterial “queer” make for an intriguing conversation, one that may not promise resolution. The feat of animal-human connections has much to do with such ontologizing work.

There currently exists a range of work about queer animals, sexualized human animality, and animal racialization, although there remains some hesitation for some scholars to flesh out race or sex where it also appears. For instance, in an excellent recent book containing queer animal studies scholarship, *Queering the Non/Human*, one finds

just a trace of work that deals substantively with the question of race.³⁸ To consider that categories of sexuality are not colorblind—as queer of color scholarship asserts—is to take intersectionality seriously, even when work seems to go far afield into the realm of the animal. Given the insistent racializations of animals, we can then study the tricky, multivalent contours of a communalism that includes both human animals and nonhuman animals, the border between which remains today intense, politically charged, and of material consequence, and run through and through with race, sometimes even in its most extreme manifestations. It is therefore increasingly apt to explore the insistent collisions of race, animality, sexuality, and ability, and to probe the syntaxes of their transnational formations.

Categories of animality are not innocent of race, as is gestured to in some queer of color scholarship; both David Eng and Siobhan Somerville study early psychoanalysis and early sexology's reliance on racial difference while also noting their interest in tying ontogeny (individual development) to phylogeny (evolutionary history), thereby loosely mapping animality to early developmental stages.³⁹ Still, "the animal" figure here is at best a haunting overlay. In my attempt to bridge the methodological and epistemological gaps among queer of color scholarship, linguistics, ethnic studies, and white queer studies, I propose an optic—or, rather, a sensibility—that seeks to make consistently available the animalities that live together with race and with queerness, the animalities that we might say have crawled into the woodwork and await recognition, and, concurrently, the racialized animalities already here. What, for instance, of the queerness of some human racialized animalities? What of the animality residing in human racialized queerness?

To extend my argument from the previous chapter, I do not imagine *queer* or *queerness* to merely indicate embodied sexual contact among subjects identified as gay and lesbian, as occurs via naive translations of *queer* as the simple chronological continuation or epistemological condensation of a gay and lesbian identitarian project. Rather, I think more in terms of the social and cultural formations of "improper affiliation," so that queerness might well describe an array of subjectivities, intimacies, beings, and spaces located outside of the heteronormative. Similarly, I consider *animality* not a matter of the creatures that we "know" to be nonhuman (for instance, the accepted logics of pets or agricultural livestock and our stewardship of them), so much as a

flexible rubric that collides with and undoes any rigid understanding of animacy. This is a paradoxical space about which we both claim to know much and yet very little, that resists unbinding from its humanist formulation and from its strange admixture between science and racist imperialism.

Recently, some mainstream posthumanist subcultures have not only engaged machinic intimacies or affections but also embraced queer or trans animal affinities that are based in targeted, and somewhat partial, slides down the animacy hierarchy. These are found, for instance, in furies cultures, or “furry fandom.” The sexual subcultures of “furries” (those who are turned on by dressing as animals or having sex with someone dressed as an animal) and “plushies” (those with erotic attachments to stuffed animals) are combinations of objecthood and animality that work despite patently false or even cartoon-styled costumes. These furry subcultures can be charted on a shared path with some BDSM subcultures insofar as both can engage in enriched animal figuration—what performance studies scholar Marla Carlson calls “theatrical animality”—without generally pursuing perfect animal representation or embodiment.⁴⁰ Yet, just as BDSM practices can deploy accoutrements of animalness—dog chains, dog bowls—to engage in elaborated relations of power, the hybrid creatures that furies represent seem to cultivate a sensualized sense of animacy embedded within animality that the costumes partially enable. The utopian relationality that furriness seems to represent is put into relief by Carlson’s sad conclusion to her personal account of Stalking Cat, a biohuman who has undergone multiple surgeries to felinize himself over many years. Despite finding the promise of community among furies, there were limits to the possibility of multiple cohabitation: as Carlson carefully writes, “because expenses and dynamics became unworkable for this interesting household, Cat was asked to move out later that summer,” reminding me of the ambition, the economics, the friction, and the intensity that so often occurs within human-identified queer sub-cultural collective households.

Furies cultures are characterizable perhaps as having a “multi-animalist” utopian vision (“multianimalist” here is meant to play on “multiculturalist,” particularly in its peremptory claim to egalitarian distributions of power). There appears to be nothing potentially harmful or exploitive, for example, about saying, “I’m a fluffy rabbit and I like carrots, want to do me?” The overwhelmingly cute, indeed

aestheticized, vigor of this subculture—observable, for instance, in a quick survey of the self-nominations of furies—seems to come in line with its seemingly predictable paths of recourse to animal becoming. The popular furies figures are much more based on rabbits, cats, and dogs than on, say, lizards, eagles, and centipedes. As Deleuze and Guattari ask, “Are there Oedipal animals with which one can ‘play Oedipus,’ play family, my little dog, my little cat, and then other animals that by contrast draw us into an irresistible becoming?”⁴¹ Furthermore, the animalized racialities that inevitably intervene into such subcultures (that, for instance, accompany “evil” animals and “good” animals, that is, the innocent whiteness of bunnies) seem to go uncriticized.

I wish to assert that limiting ourselves to reworking the philosophies of animal-human dependencies, or the ethological studies of a particular animal, or this or that human-animal relationship, carries certain risks: namely, the importing of historical racializations and queerings (or, indeed, imperial tropes) that subtend the very humans and animals under discussion, despite all the bracketing we may be cautioned to do of Aristotle’s reasoning about slavery on the basis of animality, the Westernism of Derrida’s animal thinking, and so on. These frequently participate in a larger ecology called an animacy hierarchy; and the animal position within this hierarchy is difficult or impossible to fix. The animal figures—whether fictional or actual—that appear are themselves animate, mobile. The hierarchy slips not only because it iteratively renews itself; I suggest its slippage subtends its very fixture, and it calls for us to detect the ways it does so. I use this moment to call for, not animal theory, but *animacy theory*.

Sights of Queer Animality

Up to this point, I have largely been theorizing animacy in terms of language. But I am equally interested in other domains in which animacy might figure. In this section, I turn to historical visual cultures, offering animacy theory as an optic to apprehend them, an optic that applies as much to visualities as to language. Animacy theory is a fertile means of apprehending such slippery figures as a mobile simian figuration and an animalized human character, particularly, I suggest, in the context of the history of race relations in the United States. I look to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century not only because it was a consequential period in race and labor formations in the

United States, one that consolidated normal and abnormal identity, U.S. expansionism, and Western colonialist tropes, but also because conjoined figurations of animality, race, and queerness were not mere sublimated suggestions, but rather were explicitly rendered, drawn, and illustrated.

By revisiting the turn of the twentieth century, I reveal that animality played a visibly mediating conceptual role within the unstable landscape of racialization. Indeed, animalized intimacies were depicted in visual culture that included popular and widely circulated materials such as advertisements and political cartoons. Attending to a small handful of such images, I emphasize the importance of what Claire Jean Kim calls “racial triangulation”⁴²—particularly the introduction of Asian race notions into a formerly bipolar racial imaginary of black and white, with an understanding that who was considered “white” was ideologically determined by class and nationality, such that, for instance, Irish immigrants were excluded from its boundaries.⁴³

The late nineteenth century in the United States witnessed significant turmoil with regard to shifts in labor, race, and population; when the economy took a downturn, concerns grew among whites about adequate employment, fears that engendered a competitive and scapegoating sense of “Yellow Peril” against the Chinese that emerged in cultural expression as well as in law. This concern was made especially evident, as Lisa Lowe writes, in attitudes and policies around Chinese immigration:

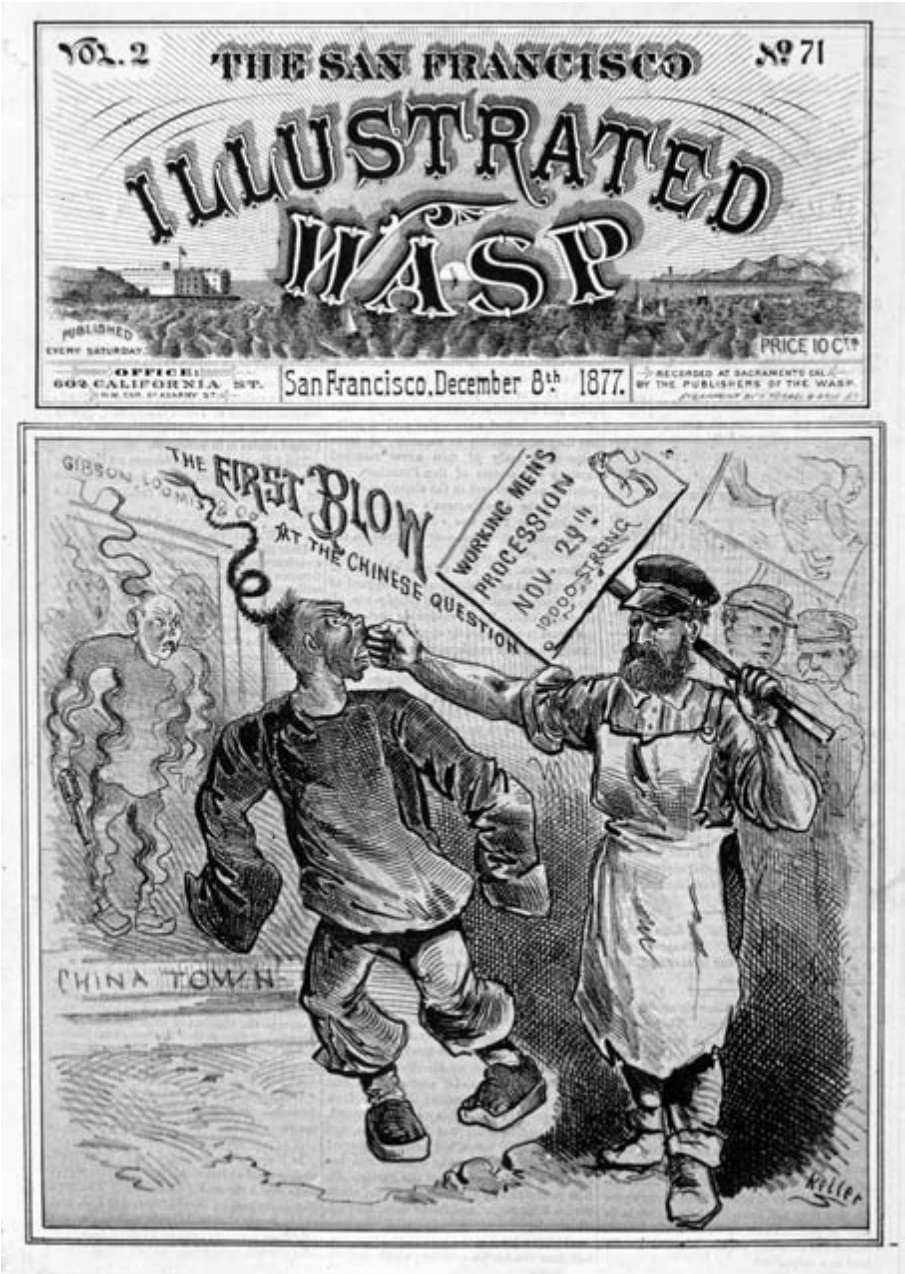
In a racially differentiated nation such as the United States, capital and state imperatives may be contradictory: capital, with its supposed needs for “abstract labor,” is said by Marx to be unconcerned by the “origins” of its labor force, whereas the nation-state, with its need for “abstract citizens” formed by a unified culture to participate in the political sphere, is precisely concerned to maintain a national citizenry bound by race, language, and culture. In late-nineteenth-century America, as the state sought to serve capital, this contradiction between the economic and the political spheres was sublated through the legal exclusion and disenfranchisement of Chinese immigrant laborers.⁴⁴

Lowe notes that increased Asian immigration was facilitated by the interest of the United States in drawing on cheap international sources for labor, while the legal exclusions of Chinese workers were part of

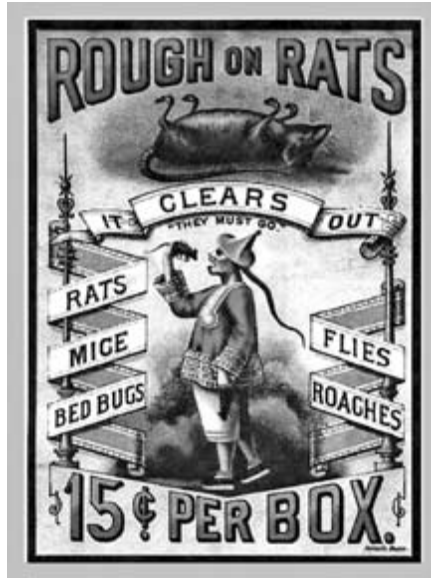
a wider strategy to create a racially stratified labor force. As Lowe keenly observes, this had profoundly gendered consequences for later cultural formations and subjectivities. The United States, which had encouraged the use of cheap labor but was simultaneously beholden to its white citizenry, enacted a sequence of laws that limited legal citizenship for Chinese subjects, culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In this same period, the enfranchisement of black men was legally enacted through the Fifteenth Amendment of 1869, which raised the specter of undesired black citizenship; its enforcement was sporadic and uneven between individual states.

The tensions engendered by these racial exclusions and enfranchisements were registered in a variety of visual media. The cartoon in figure 6 was published in *The San Francisco Illustrated WASP* in 1877. The *WASP* was a magazine that rehearsed anti-Chinese fears in an era of continued Chinese immigration. In the image, we see an animated and physical backlash against Chinese immigration—glossed here as “the Chinese Question”—as a white laborer in California in uniform leading the “Working Men’s Procession” punches a Chinese coolie in the mouth while another coolie looks on. The Working Men’s Party asserted that the Chinese immigrant laborers were threatening the economic livelihood of whites.

Chinese hair was often referred to in the West as a tail. The British diplomat, Sinologist, and translator Herbert Giles wrote in his book *The Civilization of China*, published in 1911, that “a Chinese coolie will tie his tail round his head when engaged on work.”⁴⁵ Interestingly, the Chinese man’s hands, a common signal of labor and work capacity, are ambiguously absent or concealed by his long flopping sleeves that make his arms dangle “ape-like” and passively at his sides, against the obviously active and well-defined fist of the white bearer of the “first blow.” With his “knock-knees” and “pigeon-toes” and a head improbably straining to the left, the Chinese man is presented as an ungainly figure who appears to float or flail next to the stout white man whose legs are solidly planted on the ground. His peach fuzz—or facial fur—contrasts with the thicker, virile beard of his attacker. (Interestingly, beards themselves, as masculine secondary sexual characteristics, were subject to monitoring and debate among whites in the nineteenth century, shifting between “barbarous” and “civilized” masculinity.) Ultimately, this Chinese representation has been graphically rendered as animal-like, as simianized.



6. Unattributed illustration. *The San Francisco Illustrated Wasp* 2, no. 71 (1877).



7. "Rough on Rats" advertisement, c. 1870–90.
Daniel K. E. Ching Collection, Chinese Historical
Society of America, San Francisco.

A contemporaneous advertisement by E. S. Wells Trade Company for one of its products called "Rough on Rats" (another was "Rough on Corns") essentially promulgates the Chinese *as* rats (or of the same stuff as rats), leaving a tempting empty slot where a banner might otherwise bear their name: the location closest to where the direct object of "it clears out" might be (figure 7).

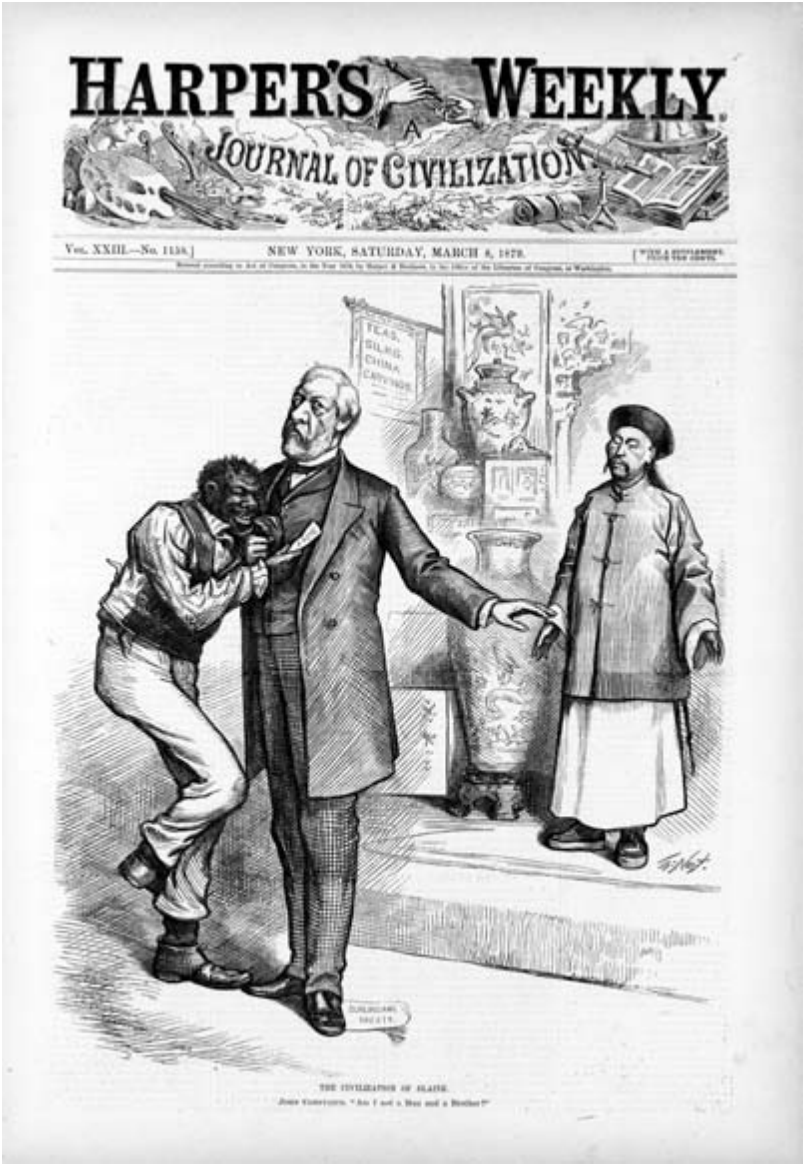
The rat poison ad, whose explicit purpose is to sell poison, also takes advantage of the wider anti-Chinese discourses that themselves racialized the notion of "hygiene." It relies on a logic of similarity between rats and Chinese people to stir up fears of infection, invoking not only a similarity but a consanguinity (or even a substitution) between the rat and the Chinese man. First, the two bodies merge through his act of eating and by the superposition of a second rat against the man's pants. This merging is augmented by the analogical prompt of the mirroring of the two tails (rat appendage and hair), which makes the rat approaching the man's mouth almost seem like an act of cannibalism. "They Must Go" doubles in meaning, simultaneously referring to

the undesired animal pests and literally citing the slogan of the anti-Chinese immigration movement. Another large rat, dead and flat on its back at the top of the ad, indicates the triumph of the poison but also hints at the animal's passivity or submissiveness. We can consider the man's depicted ingestion of the rat a form of bizarre bodily intimacy, one that complements the kinds of human queer sexualities that Nayan Shah meticulously charted in his history of turn-of-the-century San Francisco Chinatown.⁴⁶ Shah (who makes glancing reference to rats) details how unruly human intimacies—in the homosociality of bachelor households, the “improper intimacies” of opium dens, and the shared parenting of Chinatown working women—participated together in white domestic discourses of racialized hygiene and public health.

But how and when were the Chinese Americans racialized in animal terms in relation to others? Certainly, animalization was not the exclusive province of the Chinese. Arguably, African slaves first bore the epistemological weight of animalization, when they were rendered as laboring beasts by slave owners and political theorists legitimizing slavery. In 1879, just two years after the “rat tail” cartoon, the political satirist and German émigré Thomas Nast mocked U.S. Senator Blaine's opposition to the modified Burlingame treaty reopening connections with China, giving it favored-nation trade status and allowing greater immigration (figure 8). Here Nast points out that Blaine opposed further Chinese immigration; on this issue, the cartoonist sympathized with Chinese immigrants. Elsewhere, he was known to animalize some “whites” in his illustrations in order to demonstrate white barbarity in relation to Chinese “higher” civilization; these animalized “white people” were Irish. The contested nature of the whiteness of the Irish had a partial basis, notably, in Irish-black proximities in the formation of the American working class.

In this image, the figure to the left, appearing to represent a black man holding a recently legalized voting card (black men's right to vote was legally established in 1865, but was only extended to Southern blacks in 1868), seems to be simianized, as indicated by his hunched posture, diminished size, and relatively small head, complete with a darkened skin tone. The small head also suggests a visual hinting at microcephaly, indicating the close connection between disability, “freakiness,” intelligence, race, and animality.⁴⁷

It is tempting here to hypothesize a strange circulation of racialized



8. Thomas Nast, "The Civilization of Blaine," *Harper's Weekly*, 1879.

figuration: Nast was known to study, and borrow from, British caricature. He further shared (or had adopted) the British disdain for the Irish, going on to not only simply ape—if the Irish representations in his own pictorial repudiations, but arguably participating in what Anne McClintock refers to as “the iconography of domestic degeneracy.” Referring to the “receding foreheads” in the representations of the Irish in an illustration from *Puck*, McClintock writes that this iconography “was widely used to mediate the manifold contradictions in imperial hierarchy—not only with respect to the Irish but also to the other ‘white negroes’—Jews, prostitutes, the working-class, domestic workers, and so on.”⁴⁸ The representation of the black man here thus speaks to a possible borrowing by Nast of degeneracy’s visual arguments from Irishness and other European others, ironically reapplying already hybridized iconographies of Africanized whiteness to newly enfranchised African American men. The travel of such iconographies reminds us that the travel of bodies, whether coerced or facilitated by the state, is merely one strand to trace in imperialism’s diverse fabric, which in some ways ignores the “postcolonial” births of nations.

The black man’s pose is especially striking in relation to the erect poses of Blaine and the Chinese man, who stands in front of an array of imported goods as if he is an ambassador of capitalism. Rather than standing upright, the black man’s body curls over toward the senator; his right leg is bent up as his foot crooks around his other knee, so that his balance is unstable, dependent upon the Senator to whom he clings. John Kuo Wei Tchen analyzes Nast’s cartoon:

Blaine reject[s] the teas, silks, porcelain, and carvings offered by John Confucius [what I understand to be Nast’s stand-in “good” Chinese immigrant], thus trampling on the Burlingame Treaty, while catering to the ballot of a gross caricature of a black man who, though physically full-grown, is depicted in a childlike posture. Essentially Nast was saying that treaties, trade, and superior Chinese culture were not important to Blaine as long as he could gain the vote of an imbecilic, uncultivated former slave. The drawing was satirically captioned “The Civilization of Blaine,” with John Confucius asking, “Am I not a man and a brother?”—the English abolitionists’ slogan.⁴⁹

This depiction can be thought of as animating a *multiracial drama*. The comparative use of the negative Black example to demonstrate another’s secured or accomplished subjecthood is a vast and prevalent

trope that unsurprisingly has come to inform some forms of Asian antiblack racism, in another instance of the success of divide-and-conquer strategies as a way to defuse coalitional antiracist movements. I say multiracial, not multicultural, because such racial triangulations ironize precisely the facile fantasies of multiculturalism's prehistory in the United States.⁵⁰

Thus, I suggest that the simianization of this black man in the cartoon was a convenient trope for Nast. The cartoon recruits the animacy hierarchy to secure the very status of "the human" itself, since those deemed uncivilized or less civilized may simultaneously be thought in terms of primitivism, barbarism, and animality. One simianized figure stands in for the threat to the citizenship of the next human candidate (the Chinese man), who is not in this case simianized.

The simianizing present in "The Civilization of Blaine" neatly aligns with the violence of the desire for the white laborer to expel the Chinese. But things can become also more complex than this simian-other formation, and they may do so queerly. While Tchen remarks on the "childlike posture" of the black man, he does not mention feminization or, to be more precise, the intimate bodily contact between the black man and Senator Blaine, with their hands, wrists, and feet touching. But even more significantly: there is a curious intimacy between Blaine, the anti-immigrant crusader, and the presumably black voting subject nearly in Blaine's arms, holding his vote, with legs in a simpering curtsy and toes touching Blaine's own. Might we begin to think of this as a queer proximity, a queer intimacy? If we do, how does Nast's wish to depict Blaine's catering to black political desire become depicted as queer intimacy? And in what ways does it exceed a typical cartoonist's need to graphically represent strange alliances? What are the implications of the presence of animality in this queer desire? While Tchen has remarked on the animality and barbarity of both Chinese and Irish figures in Nast's images, he seems to allow the black figure's own animality to be spoken for by the genre of "gross caricature," thus attenuating any additional potencies of Nast's visual argument.⁵¹ The queerness also implicates and taints Blaine, as he is chastised here for not listening to the tune of capital as represented by the Chinese merchant and for being drawn into a circuit of bodily intimacy with a black man who presumably stands outside such capital, rendering their relationship at once cross-racial, ambivalently cross-species, and queer.

As these three historical examples illuminate, animal figurations at the turn of the century were by no means simple and were often overlaid with sexual implications. It is commonly understood that animality “sticks” indelibly to specific races. However, thinking these images within the rubric of what I am calling animacy theory, we can see how that animality can shift, attaching itself to different kinds of groups. That the domain of the animal is treated as a zone of deferral means that animality subtends a great deal below the white human man at the top, who in spite of his own superior position, can be dragged down by his own queer association. Paying attention to the relationality among the figures allows us to see the complex queer intimacies involved.

Querying Fu Manchu

The conjunction of animality, Asianness, and queerness persisted beyond the late nineteenth century. I now turn to consider—but hopefully not beat—the “dead horse” of Fu Manchu, the outlandish, turn-of-the-century creation figured by tropes of the Yellow Peril. I do so in part to provide some historical ballast to arguments about queer animal presents, and simultaneously to point to the strength of legacy and historical consequence in the shape and timing of Fu Manchu’s appearances in the United States. Fu Manchu is in some ways (one slice of) the bread and butter of Asian American studies; he further occupies the historically dominant focus of Asian American studies on Chinese and East Asian figures. Yet, as a primary site of study, he deserves revisiting with the optic of animacy. “Fu Manchu” is a prewar phenomenon in which cinema charted, embellished, and vitalized a racialized animality beyond its literary mappings.

Fu Manchu appeared in a series of popular novels and mainstream Hollywood films through the first half of the twentieth century. Of course, Fu Manchu has lived well beyond the bounds of his British and North American literary and filmic existence, leaking into fictional representations of evil Asian masculinity, and acting as a key figure of Asian American and scholarly analysis.⁵² In the 1960s, he took new form in the Omaha Zoo as an orangutan, “Fu Manchu,” who became famous for his skillful escapes: he was so wily, in fact, that he became the subject of many news and scholarly articles that profiled his intelligent, tool-using behavior.⁵³ Today, he reappears as an early ex-

ample of the media studies concept of “techno-orientalism.”⁵⁴ I wish to build on this previous scholarship to reconsider Fu Manchu, not with a mere nod to “feline” attributions by his creator, but with an emphasis on his racialized, cinematic, queer animality. Fu Manchu’s animality has not been extensively considered, and I suggest that it provides a particularly useful example for reading covert animalizations in cases where racialized queering is already at stake.

Fu Manchu came to life in a series of novels written by the British author Sax Rohmer (the pseudonym of Arthur Sarsfield Ward) from the 1910s through the 1950s. Apparently, Rohmer had never been out East, only to his local Chinatown. As a writer, he seemed to be titillated by his own observation that broad informal networks of support among immigrant Chinese resembled the queer kinship of British “sworn brotherhoods,” complete with ulterior logics and allegiances, if not also swirling, mysterious sexualities.⁵⁵ The novels’ massive popularity in both Britain and the United States was driven by the sentiment of the Yellow Peril in each region concerning the rise of Chinese immigration and labor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as shared fears about rising East Asian powers in the mid-twentieth century. Rohmer’s series in particular achieved immense popularity in the United States; the novels in turn inspired a series of Fu Manchu films produced in Hollywood, which premiered in the late 1920s (with a special concentration of movies appearing in the 1960s), as well as a short-lived television series.⁵⁶

These wildly popular films constituted a genuine mass-media phenomenon, one so powerful that even today Fu Manchu is a recognizable “type,” a shorthand for many Asian stereotypes. The films also provided a consistently extravagant imaginary visual and narrative fount through which to define U.S. citizenship against Asian moral decline. In 1942, the Chinese government protested that the Fu Manchu film then under production would offend a wartime alliance between the United States and China; the film was suspended in response. That a film was taken as an interest of the nation not only reminds us of the centrality of the Hollywood industry to bolstering U.S. nationalisms, but affirms that the exotophobia of the Fu Manchu novels and films was consonant with contemporaneous policies designed to minimize Chinese attempts at citizenship.⁵⁷ His appearance on the cultural and national stage was thus accompanied by policies in which Chinese identity was subject to various controlling efforts, in-

cluding legal efforts at containment, exclusions from citizenship, and public health strategies.⁵⁸

The character of Fu Manchu is described in an oft-cited compendium of terms laid out in an early Rohmer book, *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*: “Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan, a close-shaven skull, and long, magnetic eyes of the true cat-green. Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources of science past and present, with all the resources, if you will, of a wealthy government—which, however, already has denied all knowledge of his existence. Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu-Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man.”⁵⁹ Here, Fu Manchu is depicted as an extranational agent with limitless resources. He is a perverse “race man,” sinister and intelligent (with a brow like Shakespeare, which interestingly hints at a cultivated intelligence threateningly bordering on “white”) and endowed with scientific knowledge, a potent means of mastery over the environment and over social and geographic arenas. To say that Fu Manchu functions as the embodiment of the entirety of China is not to make too great a claim, for as this passage notes, within his person he contains “all the resources . . . of a wealthy government.” Tina Chen notes that while “the surface rhetoric of the books condemns Fu Manchu for attempting to build a Chinese empire, the Doctor’s techniques of collection and demonstration actually mirror *Western* imperial practice.”⁶⁰ Moreover, his strength is augmented, it would seem, by an animal spirit: a specifically feline cunning, stature, and ocular appearance.

In addition to this circulation of signs, a number of alternately sympathetic and hostile critics, including Frank Chin, Daniel Y. Kim, and Harry Bernschoff, suggest that Fu Manchu is also homosexual.⁶¹ His queer desire is arguably most dramatized in the Hollywood film *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, produced in 1932, starring the popular “monster actor” Boris Karloff, in which he indicates a certain possessive desire for the character Terrence Granville, even laying his hands on the bare chest of Terrence (figure 9).

The story is set in the Gobi Desert, where a group of British and German explorer-scientists have come to nab the death mask of Genghis Khan before Fu Manchu can acquire it. Here Fu Manchu is, and is not, “catlike.” Rather, his presumed felinity is subject to the representa-



9. Boris Karloff playing Fu Manchu. *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (dir. Charles Brabin, 1932).

tive load of roaming signifiers of catness, resulting in a human-animal blend that includes a distinctly yellow face. Fu Manchu's clawlike nails, for instance, which we find in a select few of the films, bizarrely migrate, appear, and disappear, and take on and lose decoration.

In this film still, Fu Manchu gleefully leans over Terrence, his hands caressing Terrence's bare torso and belly; only a few fingers show the long nails. In the background stand two statuelike black slaves who cast shadows against the walls. The stark lighting of the scene washes out Terrence's face, which appears very pale in contrast to Fu Manchu's prominently darker visage (Karloff performing in yellowface). This touch is irrefutably homoerotic, and Fu Manchu's feminized felinity is itself arguably queer. His long nails, when present, might well have been a citation of Chinese stereotypes based on "actual" royal practices. But considering the roles they played in the films and for viewers as recognizable marks, these feline nails function visually to compete with Fu's intellectual renown, altering the perceptual economy of normative subjectivity by redirecting his sensibility toward the animal. Simultaneously, his femininity hides as felineness, undercutting his otherwise trenchant masculinity by effectively queering it.

At the same time, we might argue that his animality exceeds the feline. Indeed, from what place comes his wealth of facial hair, simultaneously valued as brute, royal, and masculine and as primitive and barbarian? Fu Manchu is often depicted with his pet marmoset, Peko, sitting on his shoulder, near the primary site of subjectivity—the head—suggesting that the monkey “has his ear.” The proximity of this simian familiar suggests kinship predicated not on shared blood but on affinity, affection, or some other affective order.

Another image, this from the cover of the DVD collection of the TV series *The Adventures of Fu Manchu*, aired in 1956, shows Fu Manchu with Peko in his lap, grasping its wrists with his hands and presenting the “paws” of the monkey seemingly in place of his own hands (figure 10). The release of this DVD collection points to the ongoing interest in Fu Manchu and exemplifies his persistence in contemporary cultural memory. Here Fu Manchu is seated before a background that includes Chinese lanterns and a large spider hanging on its web, a classic indication of sinister traps. A dark-haired woman in elaborate jewelry and a brocade top exposing her midriff grasps Fu Manchu’s face and upper arm, shifting her eyes to the side while he, along with Peko, stares directly at the viewer, leveling an intimidating gaze.

But what interests me most here is the representation of the embrace between the monkey and the human. The hands, viewed as indicators of capacity and creativity (as our most essential tools), class (as in the category of manual labor), and humanness (in their significance to tool-using evolutionary claims of the opposable thumb), are placed in relation to the paws of the monkey. Whose manuality predominates? And what is the force of that dominance? If they refer to a site of subjectivity, is that subjectivity made more sensible, more animate? In Steve Baker’s analysis of a variety of contemporary artistic projects involving animals, he discovers a prominence of attention to hands. He suggests this may not be coincidental: while hands seem to centrally and uniquely symbolize human creativity, animals themselves also seem to be “aligned with creativity.”⁶²

Baker notes that the hand is a central contentious figure in Derrida’s assessment of Heidegger’s famous claim that the animal is “poor in world”: according to Heidegger, an ape’s hands are *not* hands because they do not represent the possibility of taking intelligent hold, of grasping something conceptually. What is compelling about Fu Manchu’s grasping of Peko’s paws is his presentation of the paws over his



10. Cover of *The Adventures of Fu Manchu* (1956). Alpha Home Entertainment, Classic TV Series DVD.

own. The paws suggest that all that Fu Manchu grasps is animalistic in nature, or that animality itself drives his will to knowledge and to creativity. Fu Manchu's interior animality is a proposition made explicit and observable in the "pawing" of Fu Manchu's grasping tools: his hands. Fu Manchu is not just animal, not just queer: he is porous along many axes of difference. The clasp of the monkey's hands is also a queered embrace, one that exists in tension with the clearly eroticized woman at his side. In weaving between heterosexual, homosexual, and the asexual (the emasculated sissy that Elaine Kim cites), he mirrors the ambivalently sexualized quality of animals.

Fu Manchu's gestural equivocation between hairy masculinity and clawing felinity literalizes the animalizing appliques of a colonialist imagination concerned with its others, and is itself (trans-)gendered and transspecies by being rendered as feline. If filmic representations of racialized characters almost have a tradition of chaotic rendering, this "chaos" has a particular tinge. The literally animal signifiers circulating around Fu Manchu occur because he is a racialized figure. This confusion of human-animal and female-male signs may well bespeak the confused other status and the complex materiality of the Asian male body in North American society, to invoke David Eng's important work on this subject.⁶³

How intelligible is the (or an) Asian body? "Asian American" sex and gender positions are deeply polarized; the missing Asian male phallus is countered by a female hypersexuality ranging in representation from the submissive geisha to the "dragon lady." Celine Parreñas Shimizu provocatively describes such racialized hypersexuality as "a form of bondage that ties the subjectivity of Asian/American women."⁶⁴ Such a sexual-racial polarization seems in the end untenable, and the Asian transgender body becomes both eminently possible as the logical (if socially disallowed) consequence of a signifiatory overreach, while at the same time, the Asian transgender body survives as an impossible spectacle.⁶⁵ Indeed, Fu Manchu's queer gendering poses an embodied threat; the filmic representation of this body, it could be argued, suggests the perceived toxicity of a racially gendered body that simply won't behave. This nonbehaving body echoes the strains of the Yellow Peril, sounding alarms about unwelcome laboring bodies that will not retreat to their country of origin, as well as about the possibility of a rising Asian body of power.

While Fu Manchu is, as a fictional construct steered primarily by non-Asian producers, made "from without," Fu Manchu's "inscrutability" is of a very particular kind. The queer human-animal blend he offers to us—undone and redone in every successive representation—offers no easy roadmap, despite revisitations to this archive by scholars decade after decade. Available and unavailable for reading upon reading, this is a "wily" figure indeed; to the extent that animality variously and multiply subtends the human, I wonder whether he might be thought of as claiming animality, rightfully claiming animality, the animality that we all have and that some of us hide, as a part of his righteous defiance of Western orders of rule and knowledge.

Coda: Visaging Travis

How do past and contemporary sexual publics articulate figures of animality? How do urban and rural containments such as “Chinatowns,” “ghettoes,” and institutions such as prisons produce and maintain queer animalities? When and where are such tropes *not* affectively charged and animated without relation to colonial impulses? When does disability—glossed cynically as pathology, partiality, old age, and contagious disease, and, alternatively, as machinic cyborg and as natural variation—come into play? When is human “animal sex,” whether bestial or queer or rapacious, racially intensified? How are particular “animal” species racialized through specific trajectories of “human” engagement? How do artists work such proximate borders? Some of these questions are returned to in the next chapter. To take the play of meanings seriously means that animality must be considered as a complex thing, material, plastic, and imaginary, at least in coformation with other concepts such as wildness, monstrosity, bestiality, barbarity, and tribality, as well as what it is to be human. This is the stuff of animacy theory.

Finally, how to reconcile animals and their strange temporal presence with the temporality of color? For racialized color, arranged as it is along hierarchies of labor and of primitivity in contrast to modernity, has also been resolutely attached to the past. What body presents? How is that body articulated, even before it speaks? What does it mean for a presenting body, a living body, to shift between white presence and a queer racialized past, between animality and humanity? These human-animal bodies and figures not only fatally but perhaps productively literalize this endless blend. And so this chapter might be thought of as an invitation to consider queer animality not just as a component of technofuturity, but as a site of investment, a commitment to queer, untraceable, animal futurities, morphing time and raciality.

Earlier in this chapter, I declared that I was pointedly focusing on representations of animals rather than their “real” counterparts. Yet I self-consciously end with a discussion of the strange affective politics conjured by the events of and following February 17, 2009, in which a living chimpanzee and former TV animal star named Travis “went berserk” and mauled a woman named Charla Nash (a friend of his owner, Sandra Herold), destroying her nose, hands, lips, and eyelids.

Travis had been reluctant to go in for the night to the home he shared with Herold; Herold called Nash for help. According to Herold, after arriving in her car, Nash approached him with a stuffed toy before her face, and then, by moving it aside, revealed her face, which had been altered by a new hair cut and a makeover. This makeover is codified, of course, as an acceptable disruption of the historical contiguity of individual personhood. We do not know, of course, whether it was her doubled switching of facial presentation that enraged or unsettled him, though Herold herself wondered whether this was so; and it was certainly Nash's face that received heightened damage and was the focus of Travis's attack, along with her hand.

After some efforts to stop his attack, Herold called 911: "Oh, my god! He's eating her! He's eating her face! Shoot him, shoot him!" Herold later explained, "I had to save my friend," meaning Nash. The responding policeman, whose safety seemed threatened by the chimp, who had approached his police vehicle, shot and mortally wounded Travis.

Herold, as Travis's nearly lifelong legal owner and human companion, shared wine with him in the evening, gave him Xanax and other pharmaceuticals, and shared his bed. Indignant comments condemned her ownership of Travis, saying that one should never keep a "dangerous" chimpanzee privately as Herold did, and that there are more appropriate places for them (presumably nature reserves and animal conservation parks). Yet, the "private" realm, while constructed as the inviolable civil right of all under U.S. liberalism, is politically, economically, and racially determined. That the privacy of Herold and Travis's intimate unit (other pictures show them smiling for the camera and kissing on the lips on their home's front steps, with Travis's arm around Herold's shoulder) was deemed condemnable and retroactively fallible—even "sick"—is similar to the declaration of the public right to conduct surveillance of the private sphere when certain improprieties are at stake. This is reminiscent of the enforcement of homosexual sodomy laws in the United States until *Lawrence v. Texas* was decided in 2003. That is to say, this is a story that vexes the controls of public and private space. Travis's tale is a one of a tenuous and failed kinship, one in which he had been a vital participant, finally forsworn. His actions seemed to call for Herold to activate a militarized response ("Shoot him!"), though after being shot by the police officer, Travis tragically retreated into the house he shared with Herold and into his personal cage, where he died.

In view of the relationship of racialized affective surfeit to militarized control, it is not so remote to consider the value of Travis on the public stage as not only a species experiment but as a racialized one that mediates between imprisonment and death. One controversy that followed involved a *New York Post* political cartoon depicting a chimpanzee shot by a police officer, with the caption, “we’ll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill,” arguably forcing the chimp’s referent toward President Obama.⁶⁶ Like a latent blackness (indeed, black masculinity) that spilled beyond its tenuous threshold of racial equilibrium, it was up to the (police) state to step in, correct, and mediate. The social and individual experiment Travis and his species represent speaks directly to the “visaging,” the enfacement, referred to in some divides between humans and nonhuman animals, an enfacement which is implied in the primacy of the sentience-affording visage for vegans who do not eat anything “with a face.”

It is interesting to consider what will become politically of the research which has revealed that macaques seem to possess several brain areas (as identified by fMRI, functional magnetic resonance imaging) within which cells are specialized for face recognition, whether human, animal, or cartoon.⁶⁷ This result bears some similarity to cognitive-linguistic research that shows that language is but one of a realm of cues that animate conceptual imaging. We also have to remember that humans are not the only possessors of sentience; such a view legitimates (and, according to some thinkers, necessitates) a turn toward various realms of “actuality,” whether biological research or animal research or engagements with “actual animals.” At the same time, the notion that nonhuman animals have a special interest in faces as faces, whether animal, human, or cartoon, demonstrates an inevitable porosity and interchange between “realities,” even if human scientists might not be able to diagnose the epistemic status of each example to a nonhuman animal, that is, the relationship each example has to the “real” for that animal.

If there are inescapable materialities by which we live, it is also true that in many more circumstances than are often acknowledged, what is real is what one thinks is real. Ultimately, my point here is not to naively assert that nonhuman animals must certainly have in quality and quantity direct analogues to “human” capacities. With a nod to the section that opened this chapter on animal language and sentience, I wish to share my doubt about nonhuman animals’ simplistic or tem-

platic *exclusion* from such capacities, since even at the level of scientific research there are increasing numbers of ways in which, as these capacities are refigured away from previous, implicitly anthropocentrist constructions, nonhuman animals come to share with humans certain territories of sense, percept, cognition, feeling, and, indeed, language.

In the aftermath of Travis's attack and death, the politics of (dis-)ability also loom large in the form of questions about what counts as a proper or livable life (including Travis's) in the complex biopolitics of human and animal worlds. One respondent to the *New Haven Register's* coverage of a *Oprah* episode in 2010 which hosted Charla Nash after her release from the hospital, wrote, "Seeing her face and the damage done it really looked like they sewed the chimps [*sic*] tongue on the center of her face . . . I must confess about thoughts inside my head made me ask if she was better off dead . . . but I get this feeling this woman is strong and is loaded with love and is loved deeply by her family and friends, so it is love that will keep her going."⁶⁸

"Better off dead" recalls the equation mentioned in this book's introduction between disabilities marked as "severe bodily perversions" and the cancellation of the life that holds them.⁶⁹ Bodies worthy of life: as the disability theorist Paul Longmore has made clear, there are intimate relationships between euthanasia and eugenics discourses, a dependency within the history of euthanasia on the construction of unacceptable disabilities.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the passage's repeated invocation of "love" further reminds us of the belief in the corrective and rehabilitative possibilities of affective politics (especially of legitimated kinship and intimacy structures)—affectivities which the exchanges of patriotic fervor and trauma in times of war demonstrate so soundly.

Finally, the commenter's sense that Travis's tongue and the area surrounding the central portion of Nash's face had been *sewn together* intensifies Herold's own pronouncements in the 911 call that Travis was eating Nash, or eating her face, putting both the normal human consumption of other animals' flesh and the common understanding of heightened consanguinity between humans and chimps in stark irony. Both comments, though they are quite different interactions, tell a tale of transposable, cosubstantial matter and of interchangeable kind. But this human-chimp consanguinity, studied, charted, and affectionately hierarchalized within primatology, was a different, proximating

consanguinity than that alleged between the Chinese and rats, which rendered them similarly murky, fungible, interchangeable, and comfortably distant (from “us”).

The sewing of Travis’s tongue to Nash’s face threatens a symbolic violence to human integrity that is in spite of its extension of intimacy. On a human face, one finds a chimp tongue that symbolizes not the subjective promise of human language but something “almost the same, but not quite,” to cite Bhabha’s famous rendering of colonial mimicry, a tongue suitable merely to its “animal functions.” The image of Travis’s cannibalizing of Nash communicates an apparently horrific intimacy. Like Mary Shelley’s monster created by Dr. Frankenstein, the cannibal image is foretold by a haunting of whiteness, a troubling of boundaries that is not only racialized but also sexualized.⁷¹ Ultimately, that “an animal” attacked a human here seems but a sideshow. If the attack first appeared most surprising, the tale now seems one of a family gone terribly wrong.

The aftermath to the tale was that Nash was not only on the mend but on a search to acquire a better face and hand via transplant, even as the other protagonists had ceased to live. (Not only was Travis himself fatally shot on the day of the incident, but Sandra Herold soon after died of a ruptured aortic aneurysm; her attorney explained that she had died of repeated heartbreak.) But one hospital has already rejected Nash as a candidate because it could not perform a simultaneous hand and face transplant from the same donor. A representative from the hospital explained that Nash would need sight (which the face transplant would presumably restore) to retrain her new hand, so it was not as if she could easily choose one over the other. Only a near-complete functional replacement, a restoration of both signal sites for Nash’s sentient capacities, seemed to make any operation worthwhile. At that moment, somewhere in the world, a heated discussion about whether chimps could successfully donate hearts to humans was under way.